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Philosophical Perspectives in Human Development Approach: Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and Beyond

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Abstract

This article examines the philosophical perspectives of three substantial human development approaches by Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum, and defends reverence as an ethical value vital to the development of human capabilities. These human development theorists focus on individual agency, the extension of human choices and ethical values of freedom and dignity. In general, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, T. H. Green, John Stuart Mill, and John Rawls primarily provide philosophical foundations to these human development theorists. Mahbub ul Haq's idea of extending human choices, Sen's idea of freedom, and Nussbaum's idea of dignity are key ethical values essential to human development. The central question is whether reverence, as an ethical value, could help drive human development. Although choice, freedom and dignity are vital, reverence is essential to human development because it protects people from humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination and exclusion. Thus, this article examines the philosophical perspectives of Mahbub ul Haq, Sen, and Nussbaum within the human development approach and, by going beyond their development paradigms, argues that reverence is an ethical value crucial to human development.

Keywords: Development Ethics, Choice, Freedom, Dignity, Reverence, Human Potential, Human Capabilities, Psychology, Philosophy, Moral and Political Philosophy.

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1. Introduction

Human beings have a natural tendency to develop. This tendency to develop human capabilities makes human beings the crown of all creatures. Certainly, no other animals, except human beings, transform their potential into capabilities to such an extent. Yet, the development of human potential depends upon certain social, cultural, economic, political and ethical conditions (Haq, 1995; Malook, 2026). The human development approach is interdisciplinary in nature and encompasses numerous philosophical perspectives. Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum made substantial contributions to the notion of human development since the last quarter of the twentieth century (Malook, 2020). Mahbub ul Haq is the main architect of the human development paradigm, while Sen and Nussbaum advanced his ideas into the capability approach. These human development theorists explore the nature and character of human capabilities, functionings, and agencies. This article argues that although Mahbub ul Haq, Sen and Nussbaum have substantially advanced the idea of human development based on their associated ethical values – choice, freedom and dignity, respectively – there is still a need to go beyond to explore other ethical values that could help transform human potential into capabilities. Thus, reverence is an ethical value indispensable to human development because it adequately protects people from humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, exclusion, and hubris.

Philosophy creates and practices the values that underpin human flourishing. Choice, freedom, dignity, and reverence are a few moral and ethical values that help enhance human capabilities. Enhancing human capabilities means empowering the human mind and its creative powers. In Latin, the phrase *homo faber* means ‘humans are the creators.’ Certainly, with the power of their mind, humans do create laws, political systems, cultures, revolutions, scientific artefacts, nations, empires, customs, institutions, and explore new stars, planets, and galaxies (Ealau, 1993; Malook, 2024a). Socrates, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, T. H. Green, and J. S. Mill developed philosophical ideas that significantly contributed to human flourishing, human enrichment, human advancement or human progress (Qizilbash, 2021).

Mahbub ul Haq defends the view that human agents should be active participants in cultural, political, economic, and intellectual activities (Haq, 1995). He supports a social-holist standpoint that entails a significant philosophical perspective. Social holism holds that humans are interdependent, meaning they make joint commitments, form common minds, and engage in collective action to bring about the common good. This social dependency, as social capital, is vital to human capital. Social capital is a dynamic human enterprise, always ready to meet emerging challenges, such as human development (Malook, 2008). Thus, Mahbub ul Haq has been a pioneering theorist in human development studies since the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Amartya Sen’s account of development as freedom is an excellent approach to liberating human beings from different kinds of unfreedoms for enhancing human capabilities. Philosophically, Sen is a steadfast supporter of liberalism. Following Sen, Nussbaum’s idea of dignity protects human beings from various forms of domination that directly thwart the development of human capabilities. Thus, Mahbub ul Haq promotes choices, Sen supports freedom, and Nussbaum fosters dignity for transforming human potential into capabilities. Yet I argue that, although these values are significant, reverence is an ethical value squarely aligned with human development.

2. Philosophical Roots in Human Development Paradigm

The idea of human development is rooted in the philosophical ideas of Socrates, Thucydides, Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, T. H. Green, John Stuart Mill, Louis-Joseph

Lebret, Denis Goulet, Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum. The key idea of the human development approach aims to cultivate the mind's potential and capacities. Human development is an interdisciplinary research program that primarily spans philosophy, psychology, and economics. In psychology, Jean Piaget and L. S. Vygotsky present contrasting approaches – biology versus culture – to human development. Piaget believes that biology (nature) plays a vital role in the development of human potential. In contrast, Vygotsky holds that culture (nurture) is primary in human development (Richardson, 1998). In economics, Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen are two influential human development theorists.

Chronologically, Socrates is the first Greek philosopher to shift the focus from Nature to the Human and to declare: “*Know Thyself*.” Socrates's maxim, “know thyself,” is the heart of human development studies, which means that the real subject matter of study is not anything else but human nature, its limits, potential, capacities, and capabilities. Socrates also devised a method of critical thinking through dialogue to enhance rationality, known as the Socratic method (Laertius, 1959). Plato, Socrates's student, was so influenced by his teacher that in the majority of his *Dialogues*, he presented Socrates as a great philosopher (Nussbaum, 2021). In Plato's *Dialogues*, Socrates articulates with people and develops logical arguments. Human beings are born with the potential of rationality, and Socrates transforms this potential into capabilities through dialogue in the public sphere.

Later, in his philosophical poem titled *An Essay on Man*, Alexander Pope, an eighteenth-century English poet, elucidated the Socratic paradigm shift in these words: “Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; The proper study of Mankind is Man” (Pope, 2016, p. 28). After Socrates, Thucydides, an eminent Greek historian, was interested in studying human history entirely in terms of human nature, independent of the gods' intervention (Thucydides, 2021). Following this humanistic tradition, modern philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant, studied human nature independently of religion. So, Socrates, Thucydides, and Aristotle laid the foundation for the human development approach.

Aristotle systematically developed the idea of human flourishing. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* states that one of the central functions of humankind is *Eudaimonia*, which means human flourishing. Human flourishing can be achieved through theoretical and practical rationality (Aristotle, 2004). Rationality is a primary virtue in Aristotle's ethics. In human development studies, rationality is central, and modern philosophers, particularly René Descartes, Kant, and Sen, have defended it. In modern times, Kant supported the idea of human development through the normative strand of rationality. Kant states that every human is an end, not a means (Kant, 2002). Following Aristotle, Kant holds that the *par excellence* of human beings lies in their capacity for rationality. He holds that, as ends and possessors of rationality, human beings are the crown of all creatures and are worthy of reverence (Kant, 2002).

Adam Smith, the father of development economics, wants the flourishing of both the individual and society. According to Smith, people's autonomy means self-regulation. Smith's two classic works, *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, create a balance between economic freedom and moral development (the invisible hand and the impartial spectator). On the one hand, Smith emancipates human beings from poverty, and on the other hand, he supports moral impartiality. Thus, Smith wants to defend people's economic choices, which is vital for human capital and for enhancing the standard of living (Smith, 2007).

Karl Marx advances human development by emancipating humanity from economic exploitation. Like Adam Smith, Marx promotes people's economic welfare. Marx argues that human beings are

not passive tools but active creators; through their acts, they can change reality (Marx, 1983). In addition, in *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill states that the development of human individuality requires that one live as one is doing one's own experiment of living, live what one suits, which means one does not follow tradition (Mill, 1999). Being a liberal philosopher, Mill promotes individuality. Marx liberates humanity from economic exploitation, while Mill promotes freedom of choice. Both philosophers support people's well-being by their own means.

Louis-Joseph Lebret, a French development ethicist, promotes people's cognitive development (Lebret, 2021). Yet Denis Goulet holds that human development entails people's emancipation from poverty and the retention of their own values (Goulet, 2006). L. S. Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist, argues that the socio-cultural environment is vital for the development of human cognitive potential (Vygotsky, 1978). In contrast, Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, holds that biological factors contribute to the development of cognitive potential (Piaget, 1971).

The human development project is interdisciplinary, spanning economics, psychology, and philosophy. It is largely liberal thinking that primarily underpins the human development approach. T. H. Green and John Rawls also make substantial contributions to advance the human development approach. Green influenced Mahbub ul Haq, while Rawls influenced both Sen and Nussbaum in developing their ideas of development. Several philosophical perspectives underpinning human development approaches emerged that would be helpful for understanding development thinking beyond those of Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum.

3. Mahbub ul Haq's Human Development Paradigm

Mahbub ul Haq (1934–1998), a Pakistani visionary thinker, economist, and politician, who also served at international institutions, including the United Nations and the World Bank, developed the notion of human development in the last decade of the twentieth century (Gasper, 2011). Mahbub ul Haq headed the UNDP Human Development Report Commission from 1990 to 1996. The United Nations Development Program still publishes the report annually. He also devised a human development index (HDI), which has been used worldwide. Mahbub ul Haq started a human development research program in the second half of the twentieth century, which is so wide-ranging and substantial that it provided the foundation for human development studies in the twenty-first century. Mahbub ul Haq's framework of human development, which prioritises human welfare over the nation, brings about a Copernican revolution in human development studies. It is perhaps not wrong to say that Mahbub ul Haq is the father of the contemporary human development approach.

Mahbub ul Haq's philosophical perspective in human development studies is consistent with the philosophical position of English liberal philosopher T. H. Green. In a *Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, Green states that the genuine political reformer always has a "passion for improving mankind" (Green, 1911, p. 367). Human development is one of the passions for improving people's welfare. According to Green, 'freedom is a great blessing', which is a "positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying" (Green, 1911, p. 371). Moreover, he states, 'true freedom refers to full exercise of the faculties with which man is endowed' (Green, 1911). So, Green develops an account of positive freedom that holds that people should have the choice to do what they want to do. Mahbub ul Haq's human development paradigm is based on positive freedom, which he elaborated in terms of human choices in economics, politics, education, health, and arts.

Mahbub ul Haq posited, expounded and defended his human development paradigm in *The Human Development Reports* (1990-1996) and *Reflections on Human Development* (1995). Mahbub ul Haq brought about a Copernican revolution in development studies by shifting the paradigm from strengthening the economy of nations to strengthening the economy of people's lives (Malook, 2023a). In a crude sense, the key argument is that people, not nations and their arms, should be at the centre of development. The crux of Mahbub ul Haq's argument is that people should be the subject of development rather than nations and their military power and ideologies. In the post-Cold War era, Mahbub ul Haq was optimistic that the new human age would produce unprecedented human progress (Haq, 1995).

Mahbub ul Haq's account of the human development paradigm provides a foundational research program for human development studies, from human choices to creating an enabling environment that fosters human potential into capabilities. Mahbub ul Haq believes, "human destiny is a choice, not a chance" (Haq, 1995, p. 204). If human progress is not a matter of chance, but choices, the problem for Mahbub ul Haq is how to create these choices. Mahbub ul Haq's idea of human choices is based on positive freedom. Political opportunities may be provided to people through reforms in voting rights and finance, and by minimising "the excessive political power of a feudal minority" (Haq, 1995, p. 20). Mahbub ul Haq defines his account of human development as the extension of human choices. He states:

The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and a sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives (Haq, 1995, p. 14).

Mahbub ul Haq's argument in support of the human development approach is centred on two premises. First, human development depends upon the expansion of human choices. Second, economic growth is not sufficient for expanding those choices. Apart from economic growth, human development requires access to knowledge, healthier food, better health facilities, and safer livelihoods, with "security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and a sense of participation in community activities" (Haq, 1995, p. 20). He stated that economic security is not the only condition for human development; people need many other things to advance their development. Mahbub ul Haq holds: "The human development paradigm embraces all choices – particularly political, social and cultural—while the basic needs concept is generally limited to economic choices" (Haq, 1995, p. 20). The supreme end of development is to create a conducive environment in which people can enjoy their "long, healthy and creative lives" without any incident.

Mahbub ul Haq's overarching argument of human development is centred on five premises as follows:

First, people are moved to centre stage. Development is analysed and understood in terms of people. Each activity is analysed to see how much people participate in it or benefit from it. The touchstone of the success of development policies becomes the *betterment of people's lives* [italics added], not just the expansion of production processes (Haq, 1995, p. 512).

The significance of the first premise is that it places people at the centre of public policies, political decision-making, economic planning and legal decision-making. Mahbub ul Haq, being a scholar, politician and policymaker, believes that the real development is human development. He takes the economy of people as human capital, that is, a real asset of a nation. In short, Mahbub ul Haq's people-centred development policies bring about a revolution in human development studies.

Second, human development is assumed to have two sides. One is the formation of human capabilities – such as improved health, knowledge and skills. The other is the use people make of their acquired capabilities—for employment, productive activities, political affairs or leisure. A society needs to build up human capabilities as well as ensure equitable access to human opportunities. Considerable human frustration results if the scales of human development do not finely balance the two sides (Haq, 1995, p. 512).

According to Mahbub ul Haq, human development has two aspects. First, human development refers to the development of human potential through improved health, knowledge acquisition, and many other skills. Second, people need to use their acquired capabilities in their practical lives, meaning at their place of employment, in creative activities, and engagement in political and leisure activities. So, each society needs both aspects of human development.

Third, a careful distinction is maintained between ends and means. People are regarded as the end. But means are not forgotten. The expansion of GNP becomes an essential means for expanding many human options. But the character and distribution of economic growth are measured against the yardstick of *enriching the lives of people* [italics added]. Production processes are not treated in an abstract vacuum. They acquire a human context (Haq, 1995, p. 512).

This premise makes a significant distinction between people as means and people as ends. In line with Kant's argument, Mahbub ul Haq's philosophy regards people as the end of development. The primary goal of development is people's development. Similarly, if the level of human development in a society is higher, people can be a means of all kinds of development: economic, political, cultural, sports, and the arts. A developed person is a creative agent who can create a better world than an underdeveloped person.

Fourth, the human development paradigm embraces all of society – not just the economy. The political, cultural and social factors are given as much attention as the economic factors (Haq, 1995, p. 512).

The premise also focuses on a very pertinent aspect of development, meaning it embraces all aspects of development, including economics, politics, arts and culture. When all factors work together, they create a conducive environment in which people are enabled to nurture their human potentials in the best possible way. Certainly, the economic factor in society matters, but politics, culture and arts cannot be compromised because all factors give rise to a humane civilisation.

Fifth, it is recognized that people are both the means and the ends of development. But people are not regarded as mere instruments for producing commodities through an augmentation of "human capital". It is always remembered that human beings are the ultimate end of development, not convenient fodder for the materialistic machine (Haq, 1995, p. 512).

This premise reiterates that people are both the means and the ends of development, but they must not be exploited as the instruments of materialistic progress for others. This means that people

should not be used as tools for the material benefits of others, including industrialists, landlords, and other corporate capitalists.

The narrow meaning of ‘development’ only refers to growth and productivity in economic terms. Instead, Mahbub ul Haq uses ‘development’ in a broader sense. Mahbub ul Haq considers development to mean enriching human lives. He argues that people ought not to be treated as mere means of increasing a country’s national income; instead, the national income should be used to improve people’s lives (Haq, 1995). Mahbub ul Haq’s account is consistent with Adam Smith’s account of the invisible hand, which states that self-interested individual actions promote the interests of society (Malook, 2024c). Mahbub ul Haq’s overarching argument, comprising five principles of human development, provides a thorough foundation for human development studies.

Mahbub ul Haq interprets the notions of human security and freedom in a broader sense. ‘Security’ is generally assumed to involve maintaining law and order through military control. By contrast, human ‘security’ in a broader sense means the security for health, stability, nutrition, and education. Mahbub ul Haq writes that ‘security’ refers to “people, not to territory, individuals, not to nations, through development, not through arms, and to all the people everywhere, in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment” (Haq, 1995, p. 512). In contrast, human insecurity causes instability, disease, and famine, which undermine efforts to improve people’s lives. In a broader sense, ‘human freedom’ refers to political participation, which provides people with political choices.

Mahbub ul Haq argues that four elements are essential for human development: equity, sustainability, productivity, and empowerment. Mahbub ul Haq prioritises equity over equality because societal inequalities stem from outdated economic models. By contrast to the view of the development of old economic models, human development extends human choices, meaning that each person should have equitable access to opportunities. Without equity, human choices would be compromised, and if human choices are compromised, this would limit human development. Mahbub ul Haq explains that equity refers to opportunities, not outcomes. However, many egalitarian moral and political philosophers emphasise equality of opportunities. Equality in opportunities could only be promising if societies are reorganised on egalitarian grounds.

Sustainability is another essential element of human development. Mahbub ul Haq interprets ‘sustainability’ in a broader sense than just environmental sustainability. ‘Sustainability’ means the sustainability of human opportunities. Restoration of natural resources is only one aspect of sustainable development. According to Mahbub ul Haq, ‘sustainable development’ means the sustainability of all resources, including physical, human, financial, and environmental. So, sustainable human development is the sustainability of opportunities for people (Haq, 1995).

Productivity is another necessary element of Mahbub ul Haq’s idea of human development. Most literature on human development asserts that people are the means of development. By contrast, according to Mahbub ul Haq, people are the ends of development (Haq, 1995). ‘Productivity’ can be understood in two ways: first, productivity in the sense of material resources, such as physical, financial, and environmental resources. Second, productivity in the sense of enhancing human capabilities. Mahbub ul Haq employs ‘productivity’ in the context of extending human capabilities.

Empowerment is one of the most significant elements of human development. ‘Empowerment’ again has two meanings: first, ‘empowerment’ refers to bolstering institutions or states. Second,

‘empowerment’ enables people to do what they want to do (Haq, 1995). This account of empowerment enables people to participate in various activities within the social world.

Mahbub ul Haq’s human development paradigm is all-encompassing, substantial, broad-spectrum, and promising, considering not only economic factors but also political, social, cultural, and educational ones to enrich people’s lives by expanding human choices and enhancing human capabilities. Mahbub ul Haq genuinely focuses on human flourishing to achieve human perfection and meet the challenges of the 21st century. It is perhaps no overstatement to declare that both Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum stand on Mahbub ul Haq’s shoulders in developing their human development approaches. Thus, Mahbub ul Haq’s account of human development, which extends human choices, enables people to exercise their positive freedom to enrich their lives in this social universe.

4. Amartya Sen’s Human Development Approach

Amartya K. Sen (1933-), a significant contemporary Indian human development theorist, Nobel Laureate economist, and political philosopher, advanced the Mahbub ul Haq human development paradigm to the capabilities approach. Philosophically, Sen belongs to the liberal tradition. Sen’s philosophical mentors, particularly in the human development approach, include Aristotle, Adam Smith, J. S. Mill, and John Rawls. Sen argues that both politics and economics are vital for enhancing human capabilities.

In his *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* entitled “Equality of What (1979)?”, Sen criticises John Rawls thesis of primary goods and utilitarianism. Benthamite utilitarianism, in particular, tends to maximise good for the greatest number of people (Malook, 2024d). John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* (1971) was so influential that it gave rise to numerous theories, such as political realism and communitarianism (Malook, 2017). Sen also developed his account of the capability approach in response to Rawls’s theory of justice. The nodal point of divergence between Sen and Rawls lies in their contrasting positions on primary goods and basic capabilities. According to Rawls, primary goods are the only source of advantage for people (Sen, 1979). In response to utilitarianism and the Rawlsian liberal notion of equality, Sen posited the notion of basic capability equality.

According to Sen, “It is arguable that what is missing in all this [utilitarian and Rawlsian] framework is some notion of ‘basic capabilities’: a person being able to do certain basic things” (Sen, 1979, p. 218). Sen expounds his idea of basic capabilities with examples, such as the ability to move, to meet one’s nutritional requirements, to be clothed and sheltered, and to participate in the social life of the community. Sen reiterates, “I believe what is at issue is the interpretation of needs in the form of basic capabilities. This interpretation of needs and interests is often implicit in the demand for equality. This type of equality I shall call ‘basic capability equality’” (Sen, 1979, p. 218). Sen’s idea of basic capability equality was later developed into the capability approach. Sen uses the expression ‘capability’ rather than ‘basic capability’ in his latter works (Robeyns, 2017).

In his significant work, *Development as Freedom* (1999), Sen argues that development does not simply mean economic growth but the expansion of the human freedom that people enjoy. Sen follows Mahbub ul Haq’s two-fold explanation of development. The narrower account of freedom is equated with economic growth, whereas the broader account is associated with capabilities. To advance his account of the capability approach, following the tradition of Mahbub ul Haq, Sen

develops his idea of development as freedom. Sen's notion of freedom is wide-ranging and is called capabilities: the capability to do the things that make people's lives meaningful (Sen, 1999).

Sen explains both the positive and negative interpretations of freedom. The positive account of freedom enables people to make their lives meaningful. The negative account of freedom refers to many factors, which Sen calls unfreedoms. Unfreedom, whether human- or nature-caused, affects people's well-being in many ways, including poverty, tyranny, famine, and the inability to access health care, sanitation, and nutrition, as well as political and civil rights (Sen, 1999). By contrast, development as freedom refers to a wide range of opportunities, including political liberties, good health, education, etc. (Sen, 1999). In Mahbub ul Haq's theory, it is the freedom of choice.

In a seminal essay entitled "Development as Capability Expansion" (1989), Sen explicates the capability approach in terms of "human life as a set of 'doings and beings'" (Sen, 2003, p. 4). The distinction between beings and doings is vital. Sen terms doings and beings as functionings and capabilities, in short, "the capability to function" (Sen, 2003, p. 4). In *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice: The Capability Approach Re-Examined* (2017), Ingrid Robeyns makes a distinction between *doing* and *being*: the ability to *do* and the ability to *be*. To expound the central problem, Robeyns states that the key question of the capability approach is: "What are people really able to do and what kind of person are they able to be" (Robeyns, 2017, p. 9). To explain the difference, she writes, 'what people can *do* and *be* are their capabilities while what they *actually achieve* in terms of *beings* and *doings* are their functionings' (Robeyns, 2017).

Sen explains the notion of functionings with numerous examples: a person is adequately nourished, being in good health, being happy, having self-respect, participating in community life, and so on (Sen, 1992). Mahbub ul Haq did not explain the distinction between doings and beings. By making a distinction between doing and being, and capabilities and functionings, Sen advances Mahbub ul Haq's human development research program. In *The Standard of Living* (1985), Sen states, "A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead" (Sen, 1985, p. 48). Sen's idea of development as freedom, along with its associated ideas, makes a significant contribution to human development studies.

5. Martha Nussbaum's Human Development Approach

Martha C. Nussbaum (1947–) is an American legal, moral, political, and development theorist who advanced the notion of human development using the capabilities approach (in collaboration with Amartya Sen). Like Sen, Nussbaum also advanced Mahbub ul Haq's human development paradigm. To advance her notion of human development using the capabilities approach within the Western philosophical tradition, Nussbaum draws on Aristotle, the Stoic philosophers, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, J. S. Mill, and John Rawls (Nussbaum, 2011). Although Nussbaum started her work on the project of human development in collaboration with Amartya Sen, she diverges from him on certain points. The key difference between Sen's and Nussbaum's notions of the capabilities approach is that Sen's notion is centred on freedom, while Nussbaum's is centred on human dignity.

One significant contribution Nussbaum makes to the capabilities approach is her principle of each person as an end in themselves. Nussbaum holds that each person ought to be considered as a

moral equal. In her work, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (2000), Nussbaum states:

The account we strive for [i.e. the capability approach] should preserve liberties and opportunities for each and every person, taken one by one, respecting each of them as an end, rather than simply as the agent or supporter of the ends of others. [...] We need only notice that there is a type of focus on the individual person as such that requires no particular metaphysical position, and no bias against love or care. It arises naturally from the recognition that each person has just one life to live, not more than one [...]. If we combine this observation with the thought [...] that each person is valuable and worthy of respect as an end, we must conclude that we should look not just to the total or the average, but to the functioning of each and every person (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 56).

Nussbaum's principle of each person as an end means that each person is a unit of moral concern that is worthy of respect. I prefer the expression "reverence" to "respect" (Malook, 2024b). Each person has equal moral worth and dignity. She reiterates her thesis in these words: "*human capabilities*...[are] what people are actually able to do and to be – in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 5). Nussbaum's principle of each person as an end aligns with Kant's formula of humanity, which treats every human as an end, not merely as a means (Malook, 2023).

Nussbaum equates the idea of dignity with human flourishing. In *Creating Capabilities*, she states that assessing the level of 'social justice' in a state requires learning "what each person is able to do and to be" (Nussbaum, 2011, p. 4). The dignity lies in having the choice of what to do and be. This makes a difference between a capability and a function. In *Sex and Social Justice*, Nussbaum writes, "We do not want politics to take mere survival as its goal; we want to describe a life in which the dignity of the human being is not violated by hunger or fear or the absence of opportunity (The idea is very much Marx's idea, when he used an Aristotelian notion of functioning to describe the difference between a merely animal use of one's faculties and a 'truly human use')" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 40). One has no dignity if one cannot execute one's essential human functions. In contrast, one has dignity if one can execute those functions with one's choices.

Nussbaum states that dignity should be accorded to those who are worthy of it, and they may be human beings or non-human animals. The criterion of being worthy of dignity to Nussbaum is conscience. Yet, Kant holds that it is reason that accords one to be worthy of dignity. Nussbaum draws on classical philosophy, particularly Stoicism, which focuses on moral reasoning. To have equal dignity, people must have a capacity for reasoning. There are three kinds of reasoning: theoretical reasoning, practical reasoning, and moral reasoning. The Stoics emphasise practical and moral reasoning. They claim that whoever acquires moral reasoning has infinite worth and has equal respect (Nussbaum, 2012). Drawing on stoicism, Nussbaum claims, "the faculty with which people search for life's ultimate meaning—frequently called 'conscience'— is a very important part of people, closely related to their dignity, or an aspect of it....to violate conscience is to conduct an assault on human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 65). The criterion of conscience gives room for respecting other living organisms than human persons.

Nussbaum investigates the question: What is essential for a human being to live a life with dignity? Nussbaum explains the notion of dignity as a non-hierarchical notion. In *The Cosmopolitan Tradition* (2019), she states, "It belongs—and in equal measure—to all who have some basic threshold level of capacity for moral learning and choice" (Nussbaum, 2019, p. 2). Nussbaum

offers a list of ten basic capabilities, which she believes is a minimum threshold for living a dignified life:

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. *Bodily Health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. *Bodily Integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.

5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.

6. *Practical Reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)

7. *Affiliation*. A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. *Other Species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. *Control over One's Environment*. A. *Political*. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech, and association.

B. *Material*. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on

an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers (Nussbaum, 2019, p. 241-3).

Neither Mahbub ul Haq nor Sen provides any fixed list of capabilities. Nussbaum developed a list of (a minimum of) ten capabilities. New capabilities may be added. For instance, with the emergence of the age of artificial intelligence, the ethics of privacy have become a crucial concern for all people in the world. Each person's privacy must be protected to prevent exploitation, humiliation, and other forms of injustice. All three human development theorists, including Mahbub ul Haq, Sen, and Nussbaum, focus on enriching individuals' lives in their respective capability approaches (Steward, 2013). Nussbaum's human development paradigm is based on Mahbub ul Haq's and Amartya Sen's human development paradigms; for instance, the capability to play and to control the environment is directly consistent with Haq's arguments in human development theory. Consequently, Nussbaum's work on human development is worthwhile.

6. Philosophical Perspective in Human Development Framework

The human development approach (also known as the capabilities approach), primarily developed by Mahbub ul Haq and advanced by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, focuses on enriching people's lives by enhancing their capabilities. In philosophical terms, enriching human lives as human capital is also known as human flourishing, human enrichment, human advancement, human progress, and the human development approach. Mahbub ul Haq's significant philosophical perspective is to reorient human beings to the centre place of economic, political, educational, and cultural public policies to extend people's choices in their lives. In Mahbub ul Haq's philosophy of human development, the freedom of choice is promising because it provides people with access to different areas of their lives, including economic, educational, arts and culture, sports and entertainment, which improve their quality of life. Like Mahbub ul Haq's emphasis on the individual's well-being, Sen's emphasis on freedom, while Nussbaum's on dignity, shows their devotion to liberal thinking.

The ethics of reverence for humanity focuses on the development of human potential (Malook, 2023a). The ethics of reverence for humanity refers to the recognition of human beings as dignified members of the human community, irrespective of their race, colour, language, religion, etc. (Malook, 2026). Reverence and human development approaches not only converge on objectives but also on means in many ways. Both approaches focus primarily on the centrality of human beings in public policy and in economic and political decision-making. Yet there is a divergence between the human development approach and the ethics of reverence for the means (values, factors, or conditions) necessary to achieve human potentials or capabilities. To determine how these approaches are similar or dissimilar, I place Mahbub ul Haq's five principles at the centre to discuss how Sen and Nussbaum agree with him or advance his approach, and how they are similar or dissimilar from the ethics of reverence for humanity.

The first principle of Mahbub ul Haq's human development approach holds that 'people are moved to centre stage' in public policies and economic and political decision-making for the betterment of people's lives. Sen and Nussbaum endorse Mahbub ul Haq's first principle. This resonates with Socrates's dictum, "*know thyself*," and that is best explained by Pope's idea that the proper study of humankind is human (Pope, 2016). The principal purpose of education is human development, which cannot be possible until human beings are placed at the centre. Placing people at the centre means to ratiocinate how their well-being could be improved through educational, economic, legal

and political decision-making. Sen protects freedom, while Nussbaum protects people's dignity. Freedom and dignity are promising ethical values, but people also need reverence to develop their basic potential and capabilities (Malook, 2026).

The second principle of Mahbub ul Haq's human development approach has two strands: the first focuses on human capabilities, such as improved health, knowledge, and skills. Sen follows Mahbub ul Haq's two-fold explanation of development. Sen argues that development does not simply mean the expansion of economic growth but also the expansion of the human freedom that people enjoy (Sen, 1999). Sen's notion of freedom is wide-ranging, and he associates this with capabilities: the capability to do the things that make people's lives meaningful (Sen, 1999). Mahbub ul Haq and Sen do not enumerate any list of capabilities. Yet, Nussbaum provides 10 capabilities. The ethics of reverence does not claim to provide any such list of human potentials to cultivate, because people possess innumerable potentials, and each society needs particular ones to develop. For instance, a religious society needs the development of rationality, an authoritarian society needs the development of freedom of thought and action, and an orthodox society requires creative agency.

The second strand of Mahbub ul Haq's second principle of human development focuses on the acquired capabilities, such as 'employment, productive activities, political affairs or leisure' (Haq 1995, p. 512). Sen and Nussbaum both make a distinction between capabilities and functionings, and Mahbub ul Haq draws a similar distinction between doings and beings. Capabilities (or 'doings') refer to the ability to do something, while functionings ('beings') refer to what people achieve in their lives. The ethics of reverence supports people's ability to choose what they want to do and to be in such a way that they show the best human character in their doings and beings.

The third principle of Mahbub al Haq's human development approach explains the distinction between ends and means. He states that people are ends in themselves. Social, political, cultural and economic factors should work as means for people's development. People should not be used as a means for economic growth. Sen enlists several kinds of freedoms as capabilities and several forms of unfreedoms that obstruct human capabilities. Nussbaum states, "each person is valuable and worthy of respect as an end, we must conclude that we should look not just to the total or the average, but to the functioning of each and every person" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 56). The ethics of reverence endorses these ideas of Mahbub ul Haq, Sen, and Nussbaum and holds that all human persons are ends, not means. According to the ethics of reverence, all human persons are worthy of self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity, and no one deserves humiliation, exploitation, coercion, discrimination, or exclusion, irrespective of their racial, religious, cultural, national, or linguistic identities, because of their distinctive human worth with infinite human potentials (Malook, 2026).

The fourth principle of Mahbub al Haq's human development approach holds that all factors of human society, including economic, social, political, and cultural factors, should serve as means to the ends of people's choices. Mahbub ul Haq's argument is wide-ranging than Sen's and Nussbaum's with respect to means for human development. Haq also includes cultural factors for human development. Sen mentions different forms of freedom, which may conflate with Mahbub al Haq's human development approach, which holds that all factors of human society, including economic, social, political, and cultural factors, should serve as means to a wide-ranging approach. The ethics of reverence entails at least five positive values, along with five associated negative values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity; and humiliation, exploitation, coercion, discrimination, and exclusion, respectively (Malook, 2026). The positive values help

enhance human potentials, such as rationality, creativity, and knowledge. The ethics of reverence for humanity is a means for human development that brings about peace (Malook, 2026).

The fifth principle of Mahbub ul Haq's human development approach is that "people are both the means and the ends of development." entails at least five positive values, along with five associated negative values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity; and humiliation, exploitation, coercion, discrimination, believes that people should not be used as instruments for creating economic growth, while they are "the ultimate end of development – not convenient fodder for the materialistic machine" (Haq, 1995, p. 512). The ethics of reverence for humanity likewise do not support the exploitation or humiliation of people on economic, religious, or nationalistic grounds, because each person should have dignity and self-respect (Malook, 2026).

Mahbub ul Haq understands 'human security' in a broader sense than that often implied by the term. 'Security' is usually taken to mean the maintenance of law and order through police or military power. In contrast, human 'security', according to entails at least five positive values, along with five associated negative values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity; and humiliation, exploitation, coercion, discrimination, means the security for health, stability, nutrition, and education. Mahbub ul Haq holds that 'security' refers to "people, not to territory; individuals, not to nations; through development, not through arms; and to all the people everywhere, in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment" (Haq, 1995, p. 512). By contrast, human insecurity leads to instability, disease, and famine, which adversely affect people's lives. The ethics of reverence for humanity protects human security through positive values and guards them against insecurity caused by negative values. For instance, equality, freedom and solidarity protect people's securities (Malook, 2023a).

Mahbub ul Haq argues that four elements are essential for human development: equity, sustainability, productivity, and empowerment. According to Mahbub ul Haq, equity is more important than equality. The old economic models created many inequalities in society. Human development means extending human choices so that each person has equitable access to opportunities. Without equity, human choices would be compromised, and if human choices are compromised, this would restrict human development. Mahbub ul Haq explains that equity refers not to outcomes but to opportunities. However, many egalitarian moral and political philosophers emphasise equality in opportunities. Equality in opportunities could only be promising if societies are reorganised on egalitarian grounds. Sen posits the notion of basic capability equality. According to Sen, "what is missing in all this framework [of utility and primary goods] is some notion of 'basic capabilities': a person being able to do certain basic things" (Sen 1979, p. 218). The ethics of reverence for humanity promotes the idea of moral equality, which means basic equality of worth, and it does not accept any discrimination based on people's castes, religions, languages, or colours (Malook, 2023a). In certain circumstances, where there are many inequalities, protecting the rights of the weak, underprivileged, or minority groups is a promising idea.

Sustainability is another essential element of human development. Mahbub ul Haq holds that 'sustainable development' means the sustainability of all resources, including physical, human, financial and environmental. So, sustainable human development is the sustainability of opportunities for people (Haq, 1995). The ethics of reverence for humanity promotes and sustains human potential across a wide range of areas, including cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and political potentials, enabling people to create a better and more diverse world (Malook, 2023a). A reverent society is a diverse and tolerant society.

Productivity is another necessary element of Mahbub ul Haq's idea of human development. Most literature on human development asserts that people are the means of development. By contrast, people are the ends of development (Haq, 1995). 'Productivity' can be comprehended in two ways: first, material productivity, such as in physical, financial, and environmental resources. Second, productivity in the sense of enhanced human capabilities. Again, the ethics of reverence for humanity supports the enhancement of the productivity of human potentials in arts, humanities, science, politics, and education (Malook, 2023a).

Empowerment is one of the most significant elements of human development. 'Empowerment' again has two meanings: first, 'empowerment' can refer to bolstering institutions or states. Second, 'empowerment' enables people to do what they want to do (Haq, 1995). This account of empowerment enables people to participate in different activities in the social world (Malook, 2018). The ethics of reverence for humanity empowers human beings with their mental powers, such as rationality and creativity, to create a better world, performing arts, literature, sports, science and technology (Malook, 2023a; Malook, 2023b, p. 436).

Nussbaum states that dignity should be accorded to those who are worthy of it, whether they are human beings or non-human animals. The criterion of being worthy of dignity to Nussbaum is conscience. Yet, Kant holds that it is reason that makes one worthy of dignity, while Iqbal holds that creativity is the basis of reverence. I argue that it is human worth in terms of infinite human potential that makes people worthy of reverence. Reverence is indispensable to human development, and human development fosters positive peace (Malook, 2023a). Negative peace means the absence of violence, while positive peace is consistent with life-affirming conditions: the activities that promote life, including performing arts, literature, and sports. Thus, human flourishing depends upon human choices, freedom, dignity and reverence in social life.

7. Conclusion

This article explored the philosophical underpinnings of three significant theorists of human development, including Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum, and, in line with the argument, defended reverence as an ethical value essential for human development. In general, these human development theorists are based on the different strands of liberalism. Aristotle, who developed his account of human flourishing, is the main source of inspiration for all theorists of human development. Mahbub ul Haq brings about a Copernican paradigm shift by reorienting the object of economic policy from a nation to the individual (Malook, 2023a). The centre of economic policy is not a nation, but human beings (Haq, 1995). Like Socrates, Haq insisted on focusing on human development for a better future.

Following Mahbub ul Haq's comprehensive human development program, Sen developed an account of human development as a capability approach. Like Sen, Nussbaum also refined Mahbub ul Haq and Sen's philosophical ideas to develop her own account of the capability approach. Sen considers freedom to be a key to the development of the capability approach. While Nussbaum focuses on dignity as an ethical value necessary for cultivating the capability approach. Considering the central arguments of Mahbub ul Haq, Sen and Nussbaum, this article argues that reverence as an ethical value is indispensable for human development because it protects self-respect, dignity, freedom, equal status and fraternity, and it rejects any kind of humiliation, exploitation, discrimination and exclusion, regardless of people's particular religion, culture, ethnicity, nationality or language because each human person has human worth means each one tends to develop for their own good and for the sake of the common good (Malook, 2026).

The human development approach is essential for making a better world. One promising current United Nations human development project is *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which addresses the substantial problems of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, gender equality, peace, and the environment (United Nations, 2015), which shows the role of the United Nations in promoting human development in contemporary times. Thus, the article recommends that policymakers, politicians, and legislators in the areas of economics, politics, education, health and law must place human beings at the centre. The economic policy makers should protect people's economic rights, politicians should protect people's political rights, educationists should protect people's educational rights, legal experts should protect people's legal rights, and health experts should protect people's health rights to create a conducive environment in which people can enjoy their enriched lives by any means.

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